

JOHN ST. HELEN AS JOHN WILKES BOOTH

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Chapter 17

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John St. Helen, of Granbury, Hood County, Texas, claimed that he was John Wilkes Booth. This, according to Finis L. Bates, to whom he made the alleged confession, occurred sometime between 1872 and 1878, while Mr. Bates was a "lawyer yet in his teens."

In ~~January~~, 1921, the author had interviews with all persons then in Granbury and Glenrose, Texas, who had been there in 1872-1878 and knew anything about John St. Helen, and their sworn statements were taken. These are printed in the appendix to this chapter.

Mr. Bates states that this man St. Helen was one of his first clients and that he ran a saloon at Glenrose Mills, a few miles south of Granbury. Mr. Bates describes a trip to Glenrose made by him as "the orator of the day," with "General J. M. Taylor," at the invitation of St. Helen, for a Fourth of July celebration. (General Taylor, upon investigation, was found to have been an old soldier, who had never risen above the rank of private.)

Bates describes St. Helen as speaking at this meeting in a "full, clear voice," and using "choice and eloquent language." In a later description of St. Helen's voice, Bates says, "All this time his (St. Helen's) breath came hard, almost to a wheeze, superinduced by excitement, or what seemed to be a disease, possibly produced by exposure and bordering upon a bronchial or an asthmatic affliction of the throat and chest."

The history of Hood County says: "St. Helen had a serious impediment in his speech, caused from asthma, so he could rarely speak above a whisper."

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D. L. Nutt, who with his brother figured largely in the affairs of Hood County, says that St. Helen had something wrong with his throat, which made him hoarse and wheezy. George M. Wright, also of Granbury, said that "St. Helen wheezed continuously. This wheeze was especially noticeable when he got a little excited."

St. Helen moved his business, about the year 1873, from Glenrose to Granbury and it is upon this point that Mr. Bates takes occasion to plant the suggestion that St. Helen received remittances from some mysterious source: "St. Helen's business did not seem to be a matter of necessity with him, as he at all times appeared to have more money than was warranted by his stock in trade, and he apparently took little interest in it and trusted at all times the waiting on of customers to his Negro or Mexican porter, while he was, in fact, a man of leisure, spending most of his time after his removal to Granbury in my office, reading and entertaining me after business hours, and in our idle moments in many other ways, but his favorite occupation was reading Shakespeare's plays, or rather reciting them as he alone could do."

W. W. Snyder, the man from whom St. Helen purchased the Glenrose saloon, states that the purchase price was one hundred and fifty dollars. D. L. Nutt who, according to old Granbury residents, was one of St. Helen's friends, states that "at no time did St. Helen ever have more money than he could have made in his business."

A. W. Crockett, who worked on the local newspaper, in which St. Helen carried an ad for his saloon, The Black Hawk, said that St. Helen never had any special amount of money and could not have received remittances from outside sources without its becoming known.

Captain J. H. Doyle, a resident of Granbury since 1870, who was in the merchandise business at the time, said that he "never knew or heard of St. Helen having more than an ordinary amount of money."

The theory is, of course, that if Booth were alive and a fugitive, his family or accomplices would be secretly supplying him with funds. Considerable emphasis was placed on these "mysterious remittances" by Mr. Bates, and every possible clue was run down in a vain effort to substantiate his claim. What is said with regard to St. Helen's remittances will serve all later phases of the Booth myth as well.

Mr. Bates, in conversations with the writer, indicated a number of leads that he claimed would prove that the family of John Wilkes Booth was making regular remittances to him as John St. Helen and later as David George. These were all carefully checked. One story will be sufficient to show how easily "delusion" may become "fact."

A man in Missouri had read a copy of the Bates book and thinking he had discovered the destination of funds secretly disposed of by his wife, whose grandfather's name had been Booth, called on Mr. Bates in Memphis. According to Mr. Bates this man suspected that his wife's money was being sent to a brother in Wisconsin, who he claimed was a cousin of John Wilkes Booth

and acting as fiscal agent for the Booth family under the name of George E. Smith—the "mysterious Mr. Smith" whom we later discuss. The coincidence in family names was proof conclusive to the man from Missouri and Bates that they were on the right track. The writer was told by Bates that there had been frequent conferences between the alleged Wisconsin cousin and Edwin Booth.

The Missouri man was interviewed in his home town. The story he told the writer did not agree in many details with that reported by Mr. Bates, who had claimed that the Missourian had documentary evidence to support his story, which was denied by this party at our interview. A thorough investigation made at the home of the alleged Wisconsin cousin showed absolutely no connection between his Booth family

and that of John Wilkes and his only personal knowledge of Edwin Booth had been across the footlights as a spectator in a Chicago theater.

Mr. Bates asserts that St. Helen continually recited Shakespeare in his saloon and at public entertainments, read theatrical papers and talked about the stage. Was a man "kind in disposition, careless of self, thoughtful of others, leading his own life in soliloquy, reveling in the thoughts of the master minds of the past, was modest, unobtrusive, and congenial, ever pleasant in association with me. He was a social favorite with all with whom he came in contact yet, he was rather a social autocrat than a social democrat. Except for a select few he held all men to the strictest social etiquette, repelling all undue familiarity, refusing all overtures of social

equality with even those of the better middle classes of men, but it was done in such a gentle and respectful way that no affront was taken—if such it could be called—it was more pleasant than otherwise, leaving the impression that he would be delighted to be on the most intimate terms with the other, but, as there is nothing in common between us more than a respectful speaking relation, it is an impossibility. And thus he made friends while he drew the social lines and pressed home a consciousness of his own superiority as an entertainer.

"The hours of our social life were pleasantly spent, not by riotous living, but by amusing games of cards, recitations and readings by St. Helen, which were always a great treat, and which he himself seemed to enjoy, as did his friends.

"St. Helen often admitted that in his younger days he sometimes drank to excess of strong whiskies, wines, and so forth, as also decoctions of brandy and cordials, but

during our associations I never knew of his taking strong drink of any character, nor did he use tobacco in any form, and in the absence of these habits and tastes we were entirely congenial, as I myself had never cultivated appetites of this character. We were also lovers of literature of the same class, as well as music and the fine arts, and matters pertaining to the stage. We enjoyed the gossip of the stage, and the people of the stage came in for a large share of our attention, especially St. Helen's, who talked much of what he called the old and the new school of acting, with which I became conversant, which greatly pleased St. Helen, who frequently made reference to me as his trained associate, while he would explain that men became congenial by constant association linked together by the common mother, kindred thoughts, the offspring of blended characters."

A. P. Gordon, who came to Hood County in 1871 and who claims that St. Helen worked for him about a year before going into business for himself, does not agree with Mr. Bates' description. He states that "St. Helen kept away from public meetings and crowds, and never to my knowledge took part in any plays or entertainments. He never got dramatic unless warmed up with whisky. He was inclined to quote poetry both when sober and drunk, but I never saw him read any book or have any in his possession. He was considered a very wicked man and always went around with a pistol and knife. *I do not remember that St. Helen and Finis Bates were ever intimately acquainted*, and do not think it could have been possible, due to their difference in age and character. *Bates was just a young green kid and St. Helen was a hardened man of the world of at least forty.* St. Helen did not room here at Granbury in his saloon at night unless gambling all night, which he often did. Occasionally he slept outside, back of his saloon in a wagon, and claimed that he could breathe better when in the open."

Frank Gaston, editor *Granbury News*, said: "I was in Granbury during the time St. Helen was here. I was in his saloon several times, and once or twice I was also in his place at Glenrose. St. Helen was a typical saloon desperado. He had a quick eye and sometimes his eyes were rather wild looking. No one around here at that time thought St. Helen so strange and different, but, of course, many after they heard that he might be John Wilkes Booth thought him quite different."

George W. Wright, another resident, said: "I knew St. Helen quite well while he was here in Granbury. While I remember him quoting poetry, I do not remember of him ever making fine speeches; this would have been impossible anyway on account of his throat."

D. L. Nutt declared that: "He (St. Helen) was particularly a good friend of John Reed, who made most of his living by gambling. I've heard A. S. McCamant, county clerk at the time, say many times: 'St. Helen and Reed are rascals.' St. Helen drank a lot and was awfully drunk several times and could hardly get around. He and Bill McDonald were close friends; in fact, I think it was McDonald who brought St. Helen to Granbury in the first place. McDonald was a drinking and fighting man who got drunk frequently and was quite handy with the knife and cut John Green up pretty badly. St. Helen once started a fight in my place of business with a half-breed Indian by the name of Selvidge. St. Helen came in half-drunk and in a violent and vicious mood. Just how the fight started, I do not know, but

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the first thing I saw was Selvidge on the floor with 'Saint' on top of him. Bill McDonald was in the saloon and ran up with a knife to aid St. Helen. I grabbed Bill and pushed him out through the front door. When I turned I saw St. Helen going out the back door and found Selvidge back of the counter with a bloody knife. He had cut St. Helen across the back of the neck, opening the muscles, which left a bad scar." This story is also told in the history of Hood County.

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Mr. Bates' descriptions of John St. Helen, when read to Granbury people who knew him, greatly amused them.

Next follows the alleged confession which, according to Bates, was made to him during a serious illness in which St. Helen thought he would die. This "confession" is quoted by Mr. Bates from memory more than thirty years after its alleged date, and after he had read the current ~~story~~ of the assassination. Mr. Bates says he did not believe the "confession" at the time, and, therefore, did not take notes.

stories

According to Mr. Bates, the confession began by St. Helen saying:

"I am dying. My name is John Wilkes Booth and I am the assassin of President Lincoln. Get a picture of myself from under the pillow. I leave it with you for my future identification. Notify my brother, Edwih Booth, of New York city."

Then followed a recital of the Booth family history, which was of previous general newspaper knowledge. The instigator of the crime is claimed in the "confession" to have been Andrew Johnson, the Vice-President, who desired the Presidency and played upon the southern sympathies of John Wilkes Booth to execute his purpose. This accusation Bates repeats with all the naiveness<sup>to</sup> of the new discoverer. (27/8)

The intimation is that the very fact that St. Helen knew of this great secret, vouched for the truth of his confession. The St. Helen "confession" goes on to say that preparatory to an attempt to kidnap Lincoln, "David E. Herold (the conspirator captured with Booth) and I left Washington, D.C., to a point near Richmond. Returning, we stopped the night of the 13th day of April, 1865, at the old Surrattville tavern, ten miles south of Washington," (this was the night before the assassination), <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ the statement does not agree with the testimony at the Conspiracy and Surratt trials, of John Lloyd, keeper of the tavern.

The testimony of C.D. Hess, manager of Grover's Theater, Washington, fully reported in Chapter V, shows that Booth spent some time in the theater Thursday afternoon the 13th, at a time that the St. Helen "confession" states he was returning from Richmond. The "confession" and the known facts are impossible to reconcile on this point.

The "confession" declared that on the morning of the fourteenth, Booth and Herold in their attempt to enter Washington, were stopped by Federal troops at the East Potomac bridge and held there until 2 o'clock in the afternoon: "where we made satisfactory explanations and were permitted to enter the city and went straight to the Kirkwood Hotel arriving about 3 o'clock."

The fact is that Booth had his hair trimmed in Washington about 9 a. m. that day by Charles Wood, barber. At 11:30 to 12:30 a. m. he called at Ford's Theater for his mail and was seen by H. Clay Ford, Thomas J. Raybold, James J. Gifford, Louis J. Carland and James W. Pumphry. At 12:30 he was seen at the corner of Tenth and E streets by James R. Ford. Soon after 2:30 p. m. he was seen at Mrs. Surratt's home on H street, between Sixth and Seventh, by Louis J. Weichman and Miss Anna E. Surratt; between 2:00 and 3:00 p. m. he was seen at the back door of Ford's Theater by Mary Jane Anderson; between 2:00 and 4:00 p. m. he was seen near the theater by James R. Ferguson; and at 4:00 p. m. on Pennsylvania Avenue by John Matthews. John Wilkes Booth is thus quite definitely accounted for.

by the above and others quoted in the chapter "How Lincoln Met Death," and St. Helen's "confession" so far does not agree with the evidence.

*Booth's* Then the "confession" describes a call on Vice-President Johnson at 3 o'clock at the Kirkwood Hotel, and his declaration to Johnson of an intention to abandon further attempts to kidnap Lincoln:

"When Vice-President Johnson turned to me and said, in an excited voice and apparent anger: "Will you falter at this supreme moment?" I could not understand his meaning, and stood silent, when with pale face, fixed eyes and quivering lips, Mr. Johnson asked of me: "Are you too faint-hearted to kill him?" As God is my judge, this was the first suggestion of the dastardly deed of the taking of the life of President Lincoln, and came as a shock to me. While for the moment I waited and then said: "To kill the President is certain death to me," and I explained to Vice-President Johnson that I had just been arrested by the guard as I was coming into the city over the East Potomac bridge that morning, and that it would be absolutely impossible for me to escape through the military line, should I do as he suggested, as this line of protection completely surrounded the city. Replying to this Mr. Johnson said: "General and Mrs. U. S. Grant are in the city, the guests of President Lincoln and family, and from the evening papers I have learned that President Lincoln and wife will entertain General and Mrs. Grant at a box party to be given in their honor by the President and Mrs. Lincoln at Ford's Theater this evening."

"At my suggestion Vice-President Johnson assured me that he would so arrange, and see to it himself, that General and Mrs. Grant would not attend the theater that evening with the President and his family, and would also arrange for my certain escape. I replied: "Under these conditions and assurances I will dare strike the blow for the helpless, vanquished Southland, whose people I love." Mr. Johnson left the room and after a little more than an hour returned, saying that it had been arranged as he had promised, and that General Grant had been or would be suddenly called from the city and that, therefore, he and his wife could not attend the theater that evening with the President and Mrs. Lincoln, as had been prearranged, and that such persons as would attend and occupy the box at the theater with the President and wife would not interfere with me in my purpose and effort to kill the President, and this he thought an opportune time, and that I would be permitted to escape by the route over which I had entered the city during the forenoon of that day."

(Major Rathbone's and Miss Harris' statements at the conspiracy trial show that the Major made every effort to apprehend the assassin, and was severely wounded by Booth in the attempt, which disproves the alleged statement of St. Helen that the parties would not interfere, since they actually did.)

The "confession" continues: "That is, that I was to go out over the East Potomac River bridge, that the guards would be called in from this point by order of General C. C. Augur that afternoon or evening, but if there should be guards on the bridge, I was to use the password "T. B." or "T. B. Road," by explanation, if need be, which would be understood by the guards, and I would be permitted to pass and protected by himself (Mr. Johnson) absolutely in my escape, and that on the death of President Lincoln, he (Vice-President Johnson) would become President of the United States, and that in this official capacity I could depend on him for protection and absolute pardon, if need be, for the crime of killing President Lincoln, which he had suggested to me and I had agreed to perform.

(3)

"I began the preparation for the bloody deed by going to Ford's Theater, and, among other things, arranging the door leading into the box to be occupied by Mr. Lincoln, which had already been decorated for the occasion, so that I could raise the fastenings, enter the box and close the door behind me so that it could not be opened from the outside, and returned to the Kirkwood Hotel. I then loaded afresh my derringer pistol so that she would not fail me of fire, and met Vice-President Johnson for the last time and informed him of my readiness to carry out the promise I had made him. About 8:30 that evening we left his room, walked to the bar in the hotel and drank strong brandy in a silent toast to the success of the bloody deed. We walked from the barroom to the street together, when I offered my hand as the last token of goodby and loyalty to our purpose, and I shall not forget to my dying day the clasp of his cold, clammy hand when he said:

"Make as sure of your aim as I have done in arranging for your escape. For in your complete success lies our only hope."

"I replied, "I will shoot him in the brain."

"Then, practically, from this time I am President

of the United States," replied Vice-President Johnson, and he added, "Goodby.""

According to Atzerodt, who was *selected to kill Johnson*, at the hour St. Helen claimed he was with Johnson, Booth, Herold, Payne, and Atzerodt were together at the Herndon House.

The absurdity of St. Helen's alleged statements, reported in such detail by Mr. Bates from memory, thirty years after they were made, if made at all, is shown when compared with the letter left by Booth for the National Intelligencer, his diary, and Payne's statement. (See Chapter V.)

It is quite strange that there were never any witnesses to the meetings of Johnson and Booth, particularly the drinking at the bar of the Kirkwood at 8:30 <sup>P.M.</sup> as told <sup>by</sup> ~~by~~ Bates, Page 46. When questioned about this <sup>on</sup> February 9, 1921, Mr. Bates claimed to me, that a Colonel Hopkins told him that he had served the drinks to Johnson and Booth at this time, but that the Colonel would not allow the statement to be used and said that if it was, <sup>he</sup>, the Colonel, would declare it was an absolute lie. It was.

As we have seen in Chapter 14, this suggestion that Andrew Johnson was implicated in the assassination is not new. It was first made by a southern leader, Beverly Tucker, in a letter addressed "To the People of the United States," which was published in the newspapers during May, 1865, and no evidence has ever been found to support the charges.



There is ample evidence of the highest historical character of Andrew Johnson's complete loyalty, which may easily be found by anyone interested. The attempt of Bates and the "confession" to show that Johnson was a friend of the South, because he was southern born, and that he would be of more service to the South if Lincoln were removed, is refuted by the facts. Johnson's administration was marked by a severity toward the South that Lincoln would have repudiated in every respect. Had St. Helen been John Wilkes Booth he would have known that in a speech given April 5, 1865 (nine days before the assassination) Vice-President Johnson spoke of the necessity of proper punishment of the Confederate leaders. Speaking of Jeff Davis, Mr. Johnson said: "Yes, I say hang him many times." Mr. Johnson then went on to say that the Confederate leaders should be treated as traitors and their property confiscated.

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Continuing Mr. Bates' story of the "confession," St. Helen describes how he entered the box and shot the President and—

"As I fired, the same instant I leaped from the box to the stage, my right spur entangled in something in the drapery on the box, which caused me to miss my aim or location on the stage, and threw my shin bone against the edge of the stage, which fractured my right shin bone about six or eight inches above the ankle."

Mr. Bates says: "At this point St. Helen exposing his shin called attention to what seemed to be a niched or uneven surface on the shin bone. This I did not notice closely, but casually it appeared to have been a wound or fracture."

(5)

At the conspiracy trial

May 13, 1865, a long riding boot, for the *left foot*, slit up in front for about eight inches with the name John Wilkes written in it, which had been found at the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd, Friday, April 21, and which Dr. Mudd said he had cut off Booth's leg, was offered in evidence. The boot is now in the secret archives of the War Department, Washington, D. C., and *is a left boot*. The "confession" says that it was *St. Helen's right leg that was broken*.

Had St. Helen been John Wilkes Booth, he would not have made the absurd statement that he broke his leg by throwing his "shin bone against the edge of the stage."

Booth was familiar with the stage, this statement shows

that St. Helen and Bates were not.

The presidential box of the Ford Theater was back of the edge of the stage, and as Booth jumped his right spur caught on the flag, throwing him heavily on his *left foot and injuring it*.

The "confession" then deals with the flight:

"From the stage I reached my horse in safety, which

by arrangement was being held by David E. Herold, back of the theater and close to the door of the back entrance. With Herold's assistance I mounted my horse and rode away with full speed without hindrance, and reached the bridge at the East Potomac River, crossing the same with my horse at full pace."

[The horse was held by a boy, Joseph Burroughs, who was connected with the theater. Herold was not even back of the place.]

"When I came to the gate across the east end of the bridge there stood a Federal guard, who asked me a question easy to answer:

"Where are you going?"

"I replied, using the simple letters "T. B.," as I had been instructed, and the guard then asked:

"Where?"

"I then replied, "T. B. Road," as I had been instructed by Mr. Johnson, and without further question the guard called for assistance to help raise the gate quickly, when I at once again urged my horse to full speed and went on to Surrattville, where I waited for Herold to overtake me, as prearranged, whom I expected to follow closely behind.

"After waiting a few minutes Herold came up and we rode the remainder of the night until about 4 o'clock on the morning of the 15th of April, 1865, when we reached the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd, where Dr. Mudd, by cutting a slit in it, removed my riding boot from the *injured right foot and leg* and proceeded to dress it by bandaging it with strips of cloth and pieces of cigar boxes, and the riding boot was left at the home of Dr. Mudd, where we remained during the rest of the day, and at nightfall proceeded on our journey, *my bootless right foot* being covered only by the sock and the leg as bandaged and splintered by Dr. Mudd."

[Nothing is said about the stop at the Surratt Tavern for the arms. Note the repetition of *right leg* when it was the *left boot* that was cut off by Dr. Mudd.]

"From the home of Dr. Mudd I went to the home of a southern sympathizer by the name of Cox, which we reached between 4 and 5 o'clock on the morning of the 16th day of April, 1865. Mr. Cox refused to admit us into his house, the news of the death of President Lincoln having preceded us, and he feared for this reason to take Herold and me in. But he called his overseer, or manager about the place, and instructed him to hide us in a pine thicket on or near the banks of the Potomac River, just back of and near his plantation. This man, the overseer, was of medium size, approximately my weight, but not quite so tall, I should say, swarthy complexioned, black hair and eyes, with a short growth of whiskers over his face. I called him by that familiar cognomen known to the Confederate soldiers, "Johnny." I have the impression, whether correct or not I cannot say, from having heard his name called by a Mr. Jones, a relative of Mr. Cox, that it was Ruddy or Roby, but heard this only a few times. Of course, this may have been a given name, nickname or surname, I don't know how this

was; I was not specially interested in knowing his name and was with him but a short while, having negotiated with him to put us across the country and into the care and protection of the Confederate soldiers. (Refer to Jones story in Chapter V. The overseer was Franklin Robey, who had no part in the escape of Booth and Herold across the Potomac: according to Jones' story, Robey merely cared for the fugitives until Jones himself took them in charge.)

"Ruddy told me (if this be his name) that some of Colonel Mosby's command of Confederate troops were then encamped not far south of the Rappahannock River at or near Bowling Green, Virginia, and agreed to convey and deliver us to these Confederate troops for a price, as I now best remember, about three hundred dollars. Ruddy, as we will call him, left us in our hiding place until he could go to Bowling Green, some thirty-five miles or more distant, with a view of arranging with some of these soldiers to meet us at a fixed time and place—proposedly on the Rappahannock River, which was then about the dividing line between the contending Federal and Confederate armies.

"Ruddy left and did not return for several days, from say the 16th or 17th to the 21st of April, 1865. Herold and I were cared for during his absence by Mr. Jones, the relative, I think, half-brother of Mr. Cox.

On Ruddy's return he reported that the desired arrangements had been made with Captain Jett and others of Mosby's command, then stationed at Bowling Green, Virginia [The records show that Mosby was at Winchester, 90 miles northwest of Bowling Green.], south of the Rappahannock River, to meet us at the ferry on the Rappahannock River at Ports Conway and Royal, as early as 2 o'clock p. m. of April 22, 1865. So we immediately started for this point on the night of the 21st of April, crossed the Potomac River, reaching the south side of the Potomac River. We then had about eighteen miles to go from the Potomac to the Rappahannock River to the point agreed upon."

The "confession" then describes the trip to Port Conway, lying down in the Negro's wagon, "Herold and Ruddy following along in the wake of the wagon, some distance behind. In my side coat pocket I had a number of letters together with my diary, and I think there was a picture of my sister, Mrs. Clark, all of which must have worked out of my pocket en route or came out as I was hurriedly taken from the wagon. Just as we drew up at the ferry old Lewis called out:

"Dar's dem soldiers now."

"And at the same moment some one began tearing away the things from the back gate of the wagon, who proved to be Herold and Ruddy, much to my relief, as they had begun unceremoniously to remove the back gate of the wagon, which necessarily excited me very much, as the driver did not say Confederate soldiers, and the

"soldiers" referred to flashed through my brain as being Federal soldiers. But before I can tell you, the back of the wagon was taken away, I was pulled out by the heels by Herold and Ruddy, and at once hustled into the ferryboat and over the river, where our Confederate friends were waiting for us. They, in fact, being the "soldiers" referred to by Lewis, the driver.

"In the hurry, as well as the method of taking me from the wagon, I think the letters, diary and picture of my sister were lost from my pocket, as I was dragged out. About this I can't say, but I do know that after I had crossed the river and was feeling in my pocket to get the check, which I had on a Canadian bank, and with which I paid this man Ruddy for his services he had rendered us, for an amount, as I now remember it, of about sixty pounds, I discovered I had lost these papers. I asked Ruddy to go back over the river and get them out of the wagon, if they were there, and bring them to me at the Garrett home, where the soldiers had arranged to take me until Herold and Ruddy should go to Bowling Green, Virginia, that afternoon, it being then about 2 o'clock. [Statements made by the elder Garrett, Jett, Bainbridge, and Ruggles disprove any previous arrangement for taking Booth to the Garrett home.]

"This man Ruddy stepped into an old batteau boat to go over to the wagon and get these papers after I handed him his check. We being too exposed to wait for his return, I hurriedly rode away with the two gentlemen to whom I had been introduced as Lieutenants Ruggles and Bainbridge, to the Garrett home, mounted on a horse belonging to the man to whom I had been introduced as Captain Jett. These gentlemen, as I understood it, were connected with Mosby's command of Confederate soldiers. But before separating at this ferry it had been understood between Herold, Ruddy and myself that they would go to Bowling Green, Virginia, that afternoon, in company with Captain Jett, on foot, by a near way, for the purpose of getting me a shoe for my lame foot and such other things as Herold and I needed and that could not be obtained at Ports Conway and Royal, and they were to return and meet me the next day at the Garrett home, where Ruddy would deliver to me the papers mentioned, if recovered.

"The Garrett home, I should say, is about three miles north of the public road crossing the Rappahannock River at Ports Conway and Royal and leading in a southerly direction to Bowling Green, Virginia. From the ferry we went out the Bowling Green road a short distance westerly; we then turned and rode north on a country or bridle road for a distance of about three miles and a half, when we reached the Garrett home, where Lieutenants Bainbridge and Ruggles left me, but were to keep watch in the distance over me until Ruddy and Herold returned, which they were expected to do the following day, it being some twelve or fifteen miles' walk for them. They were to remain there (at Bowling Green) overnight of the day they left me and return the following day.

"About 1 or 2 o'clock in the afternoon of April 23, 1865, the second day of my stay at the Garrett home [The testimony of Jett, and statements of the Garretts, Bainbridge, and Ruggles show that Booth and Herold did not arrive at the Garrett home until Monday afternoon, April 24.—F. L. Black.], I was out in the front yard, lounging on the meadow, when Lieutenants Bainbridge and Ruggles came up hurriedly and notified me that a squad of Yankee troops had crossed the Rappahannock River in hot pursuit of me, and advised me to leave at once and go back into the woods north of the Garrett house, in a wooded ravine, which they pointed out, giving me a signal whistle by which I would know them, and hurriedly rode off, saying that they would return for me in about an hour at the place designated, and bring with them a horse for my escape.

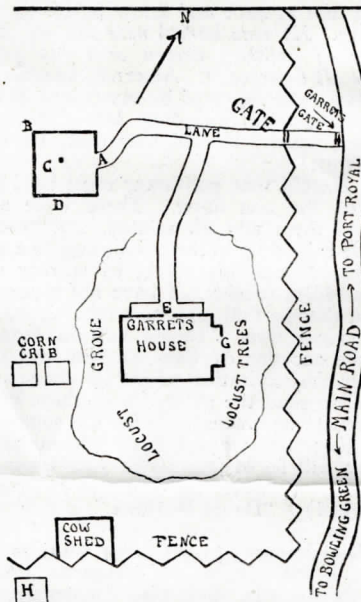
"I left immediately, without letting anyone know that I had gone or the direction I had taken. I reached the woods at about the place which had been pointed out to me, as nearly as one could traveling in a strange wooded section with the impediment of a lame leg. At about the time fixed I was delighted to hear the signal, and answered, to the best of my recollection, about 3 or 4 o'clock p. m. My friends came up with an extra horse, which I mounted, and we rode away in a westerly direction, riding the remainder of the afternoon and the following night until about 12 o'clock, when we camped together in the woods, or rather dismounted to rest ourselves and horses until daylight. We talked over the situation, they giving me directions by which I should travel. When we at last separated in a country road, they said about twenty or twenty-five miles to the west of the Garrett home or Ports Royal and Conway; I, of course, thanked them and offered them pay for the services they had rendered me and the price of the horse they had turned over to me, all of which they refused to accept, and bade me goodby, with the warning that I should keep my course well to the westward for that day's ride, and then, after this day's ride, continue my journey to the southwest." [The absurdity of this part of St. Helen's "confession" is easily seen by comparing it with the sworn statements of the men he mentions—Jones, Jett, Bainbridge, Ruggles, Rollins, and the Garretts.]

"As advised by them, I rode on westerly through all the country roads as I came to them leading in that direction until about 10 o'clock a. m. of the second day out from the Garrett home, when, owing to the fatigue of myself and horse, and suffering from my wounded leg, I found it necessary to rest and stopped at a small farmhouse on the country road, where there seemed to live only three elderly ladies, who, at my request, took me in as a wounded Confederate soldier, fed my horse, and gave me breakfast, and as I now best remember, I compensated them, paying them one dollar in small silver coin.

"After a few hours' rest for myself and horse, I pushed on toward the west the remainder of the day and the fore part of the night, as best I could, but early in the night I rode into the thick brush located in a small creek bottom some distance from the road and remained there all night. The next morning I obtained breakfast for myself and feed for my horse from an elderly gentle-

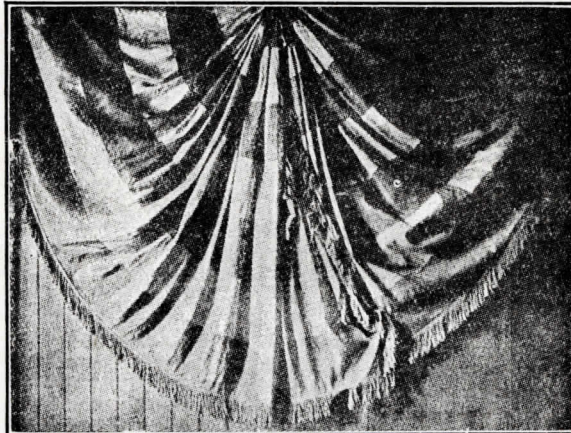
man and lady at a little country home at an early hour without further incident and interest, save and except the enjoyment of the meal, when I turned my course to the southwest, as I had been directed, and followed this direction day after day, impersonating the character of a Confederate soldier. Continuing on down through West Virginia, I crossed the Big Sandy River at Warfield, in Eastern Kentucky, and after traveling from Warfield for about two days, and covering a distance of fifty or sixty miles in a southwesterly direction from Warfield, I, as well as my horse, was about worn out, and I was therefore compelled to rest for about a week, claiming to be a wounded Confederate soldier. The parties with whom I stopped was a widow lady and her young son, whose name I cannot now remember. But after receiving their kind attentions and needed rest, I resumed my journey with the purpose of traveling to the south until I could reach the Mississippi River at a safe point for crossing it, and find my way into the Indian Territory as the best possible hiding place, in my opinion.

"I finally reached without incident worthy of mention the Mississippi River and crossed the same at what was called Catfish Point, in the State of Mississippi. This point is a short distance south of where the Arkansas River empties into the Mississippi River. I followed the south and west bank of the Arkansas River until I reached the Indian Territory, where I remained at different places, hiding among the Indians for about eighteen months, when I left the Indian Territory and went to Nebraska and was at Nebraska City employed



Plan of Garrett place made soon after Booth was shot.

- A. Door through which the dying man was brought.
- B. Corner at which the barn was fired.
- C. Spot in the barn on which Booth stood.
- D. Point where Corbett fired.
- E. Porch where Booth died.
- G. Kitchen door at which Lieutenant Baker knocked.
- H. Shed.



"The mute avenger of the nation's fallen chief." The flag in which Booth caught his spur as he jumped from the box after shooting Abraham Lincoln.

by a white man to drive a team connected with a wagon train going from Nebraska City, Nebraska, to Salt Lake City, Utah. This man was hauling provisions for the United States Government to the Federal troops encamped at Salt Lake City. But I left this wagon train while en route, just before we got to Salt Lake City, and proceeded to San Francisco, California, to meet my mother and brother, Junius Brutus Booth. After meeting my mother and brother and remaining a while there, I left and went into Mexico. From there I went up through Texas, finally stopping at Glenrose Mills and Grandberry, Texas, where we are now."

A sudden and suspicious vagueness comes over the "confession" after the Garrett place is left. That is to say, as soon as the narrative leaves the proved and accepted state of facts, details, dates, places, names are missing. From the Garrett place on, the point from which the Booth myth must be proved, nothing tangible is given. Up to this point there was some historical basis for the alleged St. Helen story. It loosely parallels the known facts; but from here on there is nothing on which to base even an imaginative tale. It is rather strange that when the facts about Booth cease, the alleged facts about St. Helen, as given in his "confession," are not even coherent. For here surely was Booth's great story—the assassin of Lincoln roaming unknown and unrecognized among the people. Would Booth's dramatic sense have been blind to that? Bates then describes later discussion he had with St. Helen with reference to some of the details of the "confession."

In his "confession," St. Helen in one place claims:

"For instance, I knew nothing of the plan to take the life of Secretary Seward on the night of the assassination of President Lincoln, or at any other time, showing that it would appear to have been a conspiracy against both the President and certain members of the Cabinet."

Reference to the confessions of Atzerodt who was supposed to kill Andrew Johnson, and Payne, the man who attempted the assassination of Secretary Seward, clearly shows that Booth did know of Payne's plans for Seward's assassination.

Mr. Bates asked: "Did not the government of the United States announce to the American people, and as for that matter, to the civilized world, that Booth was killed and the death of President Lincoln avenged? Then do you say it is a fact that Booth was not killed at the Garrett barn in Virginia? It is a physical fact that some man was killed at the Garrett home. If not Booth who was this man?"

"St. Helen replied by saying, 'As you have heard that a man was killed at the Garrett barn, and without positive or direct proof as to who this man was, yet from the circumstances I would say that it was Ruddy, the man with whom I had negotiated for my personal deliverance, together with that of my accomplice, David E. Herold, to the Confederate soldiers. You will remember I paid this man with a check made payable to my order by a Canadian bank, and if he did, as I requested, which he promised to do and left me to do, he got my letters, pictures, et cetera, out of the wagon, as I have explained to you, as he was to bring them to me at the Garrett home on the day or night following the day that I left the Garrett home, as I have also explained to you. I take it, without personal knowledge of the facts, that Ruddy and Herold came to the Garrett home, as prearranged and promised when we separated at the ferry on the Rappahannock River, so that the Federal troops, by some means, traced me to the Garrett home, where they found Herold and Ruddy, killing Ruddy and capturing Herold. They found on the body of Ruddy the check for sixty pounds, together with my letters, and I think a picture, and by reason of finding these belongings of mine on the body of Ruddy, I presume they identified it as the body of myself.'"

(Compare these statements in St. Helen's confession with those in the Chapter "At The Garrett Farm")

(7)

St. Helen has Booth leaving the Garrett's on April 23. The man who was shot in the barn was killed on the morning of the twenty-sixth. Mr. Bates in conversation February 9, 1921, admitted that there is some discrepancy here, but could not explain it. Even if Booth had lost his papers in the bottom of the Negro Lucas' wagon, is it reasonable to suppose that he also lost his knives, his pocket compass and the initialed pin from his undershirt, all of which were found on the man who was shot?

And there was also the matter of the three initials "J.W.B." tattooed on his hand, which could not be lost.

"But in this connection," Bates reports St. Helen as saying (8), "I desire to say, so that my conscience shall be clear and confession complete, that I have no cause to complain of the treatment that I have received at the hands of the Federal soldiers or officers in pursuit of me before and after the killing of President Lincoln, for they were more than once in plain and broad view of me. It is a little remarkable, don't you think, that it was possible for me to remain within the Federal lines for seven or more entire days and nights, within forty miles of Washington City, in a country entirely open and within the territory completely occupied by the Federal troops, while I waited for Ruddy to go within the Confederate lines and arrange to have Confederate soldiers meet us at the Rappahannock river, as the safest and most certain means of my escape?" (9)

Mr. Bates shows how very inconsistent he ~~is~~ or is it St. Helen? can be by saying later in his book (10); "Realizing that he was hunted with a zeal beyond the zeal prompting the searchers in following the ordinary criminal and bringing him to justice; stimulated by a burning desire for vengeance for the crime that startled the whole world, no less than the hope of the magnificent reward, which meant a fortune in those days, John Wilkes Booth decided to cast his lot among the Indians." and John Wilkes Booth said in his own diary, "Wet, cold and starving, with every man's hand against me, I am here in despair--tonight I try to escape these blood-hounds once more." (11)

Mr. Bates claims that he located a "large family of people by the name of Ruddy living within the immediate neighborhood of Samuel Cox." (12)

The author, pursuing the investigation in Southern Maryland, had the following statement from A.W. Neale, a soldier of the Confederacy and an old resident of La Plata, about five miles from the ~~old~~ Cox home:

"Colonel Samuel Cox was a strong and dominant man; but I would not say that he ruled the neighborhood in which he lived. There were many men in the neighborhood as strong and dominant as he. I also knew Tom Jones and Franklin Robey well. Tom Jones had a regular 'poker face.' You could not tell from his face whether he was betting on a pair of deuces or a straight royal flush. I never heard of a man named Ruddy in this country. Ruddy is probably intended for Robey."

John Garner, in a sworn statement made July 25, 1921, said:

(13)

"I am 82 years old and have lived in this neighborhood all my life, and remember quite clearly events happening during the Civil War, 1860-1865.

"At the time of the assassination of President Lincoln I was living down on the 'Neck,' not far from the home of Thomas A. Jones. I knew him, 'Colonel' Samuel Cox of Cox's Station, and Franklin Robey, 'Colonel' Cox's overseer, all quite well. I also was well acquainted with George Atzerodt, who was hung as one of the conspirators. I went hunting with him a good many times when we were boys together.

"Atzerodt, as a boy, didn't have good 'horse sense' and when he grew up he became quite a drinker and a 'good for nothing.'

"Colonel Cox was a wealthy and pompous man and practically ruled this section of the country. Tom Jones was a foster brother of 'Colonel' Cox and a contraband runner across the Potomac River during the Civil War. He was arrested and imprisoned for this several times. Jones was the type of man who could put on a 'long' face and be the most innocent looking fellow in the world when he wanted to.

"Franklin Robey was Colonel Cox's overseer. He was a quiet sort of man who didn't say much unless religiously aroused. He was a Shouting Methodist by religion, and his sport was fox hunting.

*man*

"These three ~~people~~, Colonel Cox, Tom Jones, Franklin Robey, and an old Negro by the name of Woodland, who worked for Jones, are the only ones I ever heard of being connected with the care of Booth and Herold at Cox's place. Jones took them from there to the Potomac. I have never heard of a family of Ruddys and am sure no one by the name of Ruddy ever lived around Cox's station.

"Franklin Robey, I know, was alive thirty-two years ago, for I moved into the place I am now living at that time, and after I moved Robey spent a night with us.

"Robey always claimed that he had very little to do with the care of Booth and Herold; that Jones was really the man who cared for them.

"About the time Robey was here last, Tom Jones had been convinced by a young fellow by the name of Mattingly that he should write a book about Booth and that they—Jones and Mattingly—would sell it at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. They went to Chicago and tried to sell it from a tent. Jones was inside the tent, and Mattingly stood outside telling the crowd that the man who aided John Wilkes Booth to escape was inside and would sell them copies of his book which told the story. An old Union soldier stepped up and said that he was a boyhood friend of Abe Lincoln and

would like to get hold of the \_\_\_\_\_ that aided Lincoln's murderer to escape, and just to let him inside. Jones heard this and went out of the back end of the tent, and he and Mattingly didn't try to sell any more of the books.

"As I remember, when Robey stayed with us that night Jones was mentioned, and the big reward offered for Booth and Herold, and Robey 'opined that he guessed Tom was more afraid of Colonel Cox than he was of the Federal Army or his desire to have the reward.'

"Jones always said that Herold had driven the horses—Booth's and Herold's—into the quicksand in the swamp near Cox's place and shot them, and that the horses buried themselves. Signed—JOHN (X) GARNER."

Giving corroborative testimony, Charles Garner, son of John Garner, stated that Franklin Robey died about twenty years ago.

He further stated, "My father, Franklin Robey, myself, and several others were out fox hunting a number of times. I remember Robey was a good Methodist and would not swear like most of us. He used a peculiar cuss-word, 'Dahidet, dahidet.'" But Mr. Garner could not say what it meant.



The Maryland directory of 1878, a copy of which is in the Congressional Library, Washington, D. C., gives Franklin A. Robey as a farmer near La Plate, which is four or five miles from Cox's station. The name "Ruddy" could not be found in the directory.

From the evidence submitted one must decide that whoever was shot at the Garrett barn, it was not Franklin Robey or "Ruddy."

(14)

According to Bates, he left Granbury sometime in 1875 and later settled in Memphis, Tennessee. As far as can be determined from statements of Granbury people, St. Helen left about 1875 or 1876 for parts unknown.

"I determined," Mr. Bates says, "to drop the subject (the "confession") for all time to come--treating it as a myth unfounded in fact--a story that existed only in the mind of St. Helen, a comparatively demented man, a crank, who gloried in deceiving me to the idea. I preferred to accept the story of the event referred to as it is told by the government--the accepted facts of history rather than those of this man of mystery."

(15)

Mr. Bates says, "During this interval of time (from time he left Texas, about 1875 until 1898) my location being more convenient to books and to acquiring information, I investigated the subject of the assassination of President Lincoln and its attendant circumstances in view of the statements made by St. Helen."

It would have been difficult to make any such investigation without coming upon many published pictures of John Wilkes Booth. Ray Stannard Baker's article, most of which Mr. Bates uses in the chapter preceding the one now under discussion, had a very good one. But Mr. Bates "assumed that the tintype," given him by St. Helen, was some one of the Herolds. Such an unusual "confession" and the tintype in his possession all these years, and no attempt to compare it with a likeness of the man it was supposed to represent!

Judge B.M. Estes, of Granbury, who knew both St. Helen and Bates, said to the author in January, 1921; "As I remember St. Helen, he was just the type of man that would tell a "kid" like Bates such a darn-fool yarn if it wasn't true, but never, if it was. I do not believe that St. Helen ever made such a confession to Bates seriously. He might have told him some such a story as a reason for not wanting to tell the true story, knowing that if Bates ever told it, no one would believe him."

*as has been shown in a previous paragraph quoted from Mr. Bates' book*  
Bates, himself, acknowledged that he did not take the "Confession" seriously, for he says, ~~(15); "So I determined to drop the subject for all time to come--treating it as a myth unfounded in fact--a story that existed only in the mind of St. Helen, a comparatively demented man, a crank, who gloried in deceiving me to the idea."~~  
*but " ed "*

"Then," stated Bates (16), "I would think he could have been equally as well John St. Helen, John Smith or John Brown, or any other man, who had committed some crime other than that of the assassination of President Lincoln, for the commission of which he would have been equally as anxious to avoid

*repetition*

detection under any other name, or for any other crime, if such crime had any connection with violation of the Federal Law. In other words, he could as well have been a mail robber as the assassin of a President. So, that I could place but little importance in these statements and circumstances as a proof that St. Helen was in fact John Wilkes Booth, but rather thought of his confession as an evidence of an identity not yet spoken of."

As a matter of fact it would be rather clever for a criminal to confess that he was some other criminal who was dead, for if he then ever faces the confession, he could easily prove that it was false.

Why didn't Mr. Bates get some corroborative statements from Granbury people with reference to St. Helen's description and actions while a resident there? This would have been so easy and valuable as part of his alleged "exhaustive and painstaking investigation."

Among other articles, did Bates read the story of Chris Ritter? It was published in the Chicago Chronicle, January 31, 1897, and in numerous other papers, eleven months before that of Dana and more than ten years before Bates brought out his own book. While both the Bates' book and the Ritter story are about as far from the truth as one could imagine, yet they agree in many of their false details, as a comparison will show. The Ritter story, which is reprinted in our Chapter 15, suggests "the lost papers" falsehood, and the substitution in the barn of another carrying these papers, only Ritter has Booth and "Fox" instead of Bates' "Ruddy" change identities. This Ritter story was called to Bates' attention in a letter from an actor, Walter Hubbell, on June 17th, 1907, and this was before the publication of the Bates book. Hubbell also speaks of "Ruddy", an overseer at Garrett's farm. Is this also the source of the "Ruddy" legend?

Notes.

(1) The pages following this note contain, as an appendix to Chapter 16, the section from the Hood County History dealing with St. Helen and the sworn statements of D.L. Nutt, George M. Wright, W.W. Snyder, A.W.

Crockett, "Captain" J.H. Doyle, Frank Gaston and A.P. Gordon, and others who were in business in Granbury during the time St. Helen was there.

The following is an excerpt FROM "A HISTORY OF HOOD COUNTY," published by Thos. T. Ewell in 1895, (Page 91):

"C.C. Alexander was a man of intelligence and prominence in this locality. He lived on Squaw Creek and about Barnard's mill, and was a surveyor. During the war had been County Judge of Johnson. A daughter of his was the wife of James Wray, a prominent man in early times of Squaw Creek, and who has several children yet living in this vicinity. Wray was a brave and brawny man, but quiet and peaceably disposed; and it is related that during the turbulent times, two men at enmity with him, conspired to make way with him. One of these, St. Helen, by name, had a serious impediment in his speech, caused from asthma, so he could rarely speak above a whisper. They agreed to get Wray into a house, extinguish the lights and St. Helen was to immediately knock Wray down and his confederate then to fall upon him and cut his throat; but when St. Helen made at his victim, the latter anticipating him, reversed the plan by felling St. Helen, who in the darkness was immediately fallen upon by his fellow conspirator with knife applied to his throat and would have soon been dispatched, but the exigency of the situation caused the unfortunate St. Helen, for the moment, to gain the use of his vocal cords and loudly announce his identity."

D. L. (Lee) Nutt.

At the time St. Helen was in Granbury, about 1871-75, I was in the grocery and liquor firm of J. F. and J. Nutt Brothers, and always considered myself as a pretty good friend of "Saint"

He had something wrong with the inside of his throat which made him hoarse and wheezy. He seemed to be a little stoop-shouldered and turned his head as though he had a stiff neck. He carried a cane occasionally but not very often and I never noticed him limp.

St. Helen could draw beautiful pictures of birds and animals. I never saw him draw anything else. At no time did he ever have more money that he could have made in the business, that I ever knew of. He could have easily saved at least a thousand dollars a year in his business if he had been of the saving type. He was particularly a good friend of Jno. Reed, who made most of his living by gambling. St. Helen was a man of fine brain. It was talked around that he drew up a paper which helped Reed beat an old man by the name of Ward out of his farm. I remember A. S. Mc Camant (now dead) was the County Clerk at the time and did not like St. Helen, who said he was a crook, and Mc. Camant would tell of the Ward deal with which he was familiar. I've heard Mc Camant say many times: "St. Helen and Reed are rascals." The Court House burned in the Spring of 1875 and the story was that Reed set it on fire because he had been indicted for some crookedness and wished to destroy the evidence. As I remember, Reed was tried for some kind of an offense but beat the case and got off in some way. I do not remember whether it was for the offense of arson or not.

St. Helen drank a lot and was awfully drunk several times and could hardly get around. He and Bill Mc. Donald were close friends, in fact, I think it was Mc. Donald who brought St. Helen to Granbury in the first place.

Mc. Donald was a drinking and fighting man who got drunk frequently and was quite handy with the knife and cut Jno. Green up pretty badly.

St. Helen once started a fight in my place of business with a half-breed Indian by the name of Selvidge. St. Helen came in half drunk and in a violent and vicious mood. Just how the fight started, I do not know, but the first thing I saw was Selvidge on the floor with "Saint" on top of him. Bill Mc. Donald was in the saloon and ran up with a knife to aid St. Helen. I grabbed Bill and pushed him out through the front door. When I turned I saw St. Helen going out the back door and found Selvidge back of the counter with a bloody knife. He had cut St. Helen across the back of the neck, opening the muscles, which left a bad scar.

The nearest St. Helen and I came to having trouble was over old Man Taylor, an old Confederate soldier, who hung around St. Helen's place and mine. He was "Simple-minded" and cranky. St. Helen didn't like old Taylor and not only ordered him to keep out of his saloon, but also out of town. Just for what particular reason I do not know. Taylor came over to my place and St. Helen followed him and tried to run him out. I ordered St. Helen to leave the old man alone, which he resented and patted his pistol pocket at me threateningly but left without starting trouble.

I have some recollection that St. Helen was sick at one time in some room upstairs. Am sure it was not in the back of the saloon and I believe some of the men sat up with him and my best recollection was, that he was pretty sick.

I do not think he sold his place of business to anyone, but merely sold his stock out and left. He didn't even say "Good Bye."

I remember Bates and the only legal business I know of him attending to for St. Helen, was for some criminal offense which was tried down about Tyler, in East Texas. Colonel Cooper was an attorney here at the time

and was a particular friend of St. Helen's and they were together a great deal.

I have nothing against Bates and always regarded him as an honest, upright citizen.

(SIGNED) D.L. NUTT.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this the 23rd day of July, 1921, by the said D.L. Nutt.

(SIGNED) R. E. ESTES.

Notary Public Hood County, Texas.

D.L. Nutt came to Hood County with his brother and father in 1859. "These Nutt brothers," the County History states, "have figured very largely in the affairs of Hood County, especially anterior and during the period of organization."

Several pages 21-25 of the history are devoted to the brothers and father, who, it claims, by reason of their situation and close connection with officials and public affairs and the natural kindness of their dispositions, at all times exerted a wholesome influence."

George M. Wright.

I knew St. Helen quite well while he was here in Granbury. He had a large scar on the right side of his throat which was quite prominent and easily seen. He wheezed continuously, which I always thought was due to his cut throat. This wheezing was especially noticeable when he got a little excited.

St. Helen was about forty or forty-five years old at the time he was here. While I remember him quoting poetry, I do not remember of him ever making any fine speeches. This would have been impossible anyway on account of his throat.

(SIGNED) G. M. WRIGHT.

Sworn to and subscribed before me by the said Geo. M. Wright on this the 18th day of July, 1921.

(SIGNED) ROY E. ESTES.

Notary Public Hood County, Texas.

I, W.W.Snyder, remember very clearly circumstances attending my indictment by the Federal Court at Tyler, Texas, in 1871, for selling whiskey at Glenrose Mills without a license. The selling was actually done by man of the name John St. Helen to whom I had sold my place of business. A young attorney by the name of Finis Bates represented St. Helen. Bates came to me and said \*St. Helen did not want to appear in court, and that it would be necessary for me to appear. We went to Tyler in a buggy, I taking \$500.00 of my own money with me. Bates went to the court, made some arrangement with the Judge, came back and told me that the expenses and cost would be \$80.00, which amount I gave him, and for which I was never reimbursed by either Bates or St. Helen. I never knew St. Helen to have any large amounts of money, as I remember he could not have paid more than \$150.00 for my business.

Signed at Confederate Home, Austin, Texas.  
January 20, 1921.

W W Snyder

Witnessed

(Miss) Dainty Guilliams, Secretary  
D J Dewees



7

S T A T E M E N T

OF

A. W. Crockett

I was working in a print-shop in Granbury when St. Helen ran his saloon here. St. Helen carried a small ad in the local paper for his saloon, the "Black Hawk" for wines, liquors, and cigars and must have made quite a little money in his business, as Granbury was headquarters for the Cowboys of West Texas then.

St. Helen claimed to be a Southern man. I do not remember him ever being sick at Granbury, and never heard about him having any special amount of money, at least, not more than he could make in his business. If he had received remittances from some outside source through the Post Office, it would eventually have become known.

St. Helen was a jolly fellow in his saloon and was well liked by the Cowboys.

I remember Finis Bates, a young attorney who left Granbury about 1874, going to Mississippi. Very few people in Granbury, who knew both, believe that St. Helen was John Wilkes Booth, even after Bates' book came out.

(SIGNED) A. W. CROCKETT

Sworn to and subscribed before me by the said A. W. Crockett on this the 18th day of July, 1921 and I certify that all erasures and interlineations were made before signing.

(SIGNED) ROY E. ESTES

Notary Public Hood County, Texas.

History Hood County, p. 48 and 129, 1872, A.W. Crockett, a grandson of Davy Crockett, entered "Vidette" office as an apprentice.

Capt. J. H. Doyle.

I was in the Merchandise business in Cranbury in the seventies and knew St. Helen quite well, but my memory is not as good back to that time as would be that of A. P. Gordon's or Lee Nutt's, both of whom knew St. Helen much better than I did.

I remember that St. Helen had had his neck cut, and talked with a wheeze, and turned his head as though he had a slight stiff neck.

He was in a fight once at Nutt's place with a fellow by the name of Selvidge, who cut him across the back of the neck.

I think St. Helen was sick enough at one time to have a doctor, but do not remember any of the details.

His place of business was little more than a shack. Most of them here were at that time. I never knew or heard of St. Helen having more than an ordinary amount of money.

He left here in 1873 or 1874 as well as I can remember.

(SIGNED) J. H. DOYLE.

Sworn to and subscribed before me by the said J. H. Doyle on this the 18th day of July, 1921 and I certify that all erasures and interlineations were made before signing.

(SIGNED) ROY E. ESTES.  
Notary Public Hood County, Texas.

"The History of Hood County," P. 123-4, States that J.H. Doyle came to that County "in about 1870" and entered the merchantile business.

Frank Gaston.

I was in Granbury during the time St. Helen was here. I was in his saloon several times, and once or twice I was also in his place at Glen Rose. There were only a couple cabins and a mill there then.

St. Helen was a typical saloon desperado and very keen. He had a quick eye and sometimes his eyes were rather wild looking. No one around here at that time thought St. Helen so strange and different, but of course many, after they heard that he might be John Wilkes Booth, thought him quite different. After this period I was connected with newspapers in some of the larger cities and saw Edwin Booth and many other actors, and I do not think St. Helen ever acted much like one.

I came back here in 1887 and became editor of the Granbury News. Later I helped Major Thos. T. Ewell write the local County history in 1895. Major Ewell was one of our first attorneys, having been admitted to the Bar in Granbury in 1871, and knew St. Helen. I mentioned St. Helen for a sketch but the Major said "No. He was only a cheap desperado. We won't put him in." He was mentioned on page 90 in connection with the attempted murder of another of our citizens.

(SIGNED) FRANK GASTON.

Sworn to and subscribed before me by the said Frank Gaston on this the 18th day of July, 1921.

(SIGNED) ROY E ESTES.  
Notary Public Hood County, Texas.

GRANBURY, TEXAS.

## STATEMENT OF A. P. GORDON.

I entered the grocery and saloon business in Granbury in 1871 and soon after employed Richard St. Helen for about a year, after which time he left me and started the "Black Hawk" saloon. St. Helen was tall and slim. He must have been about six feet tall, and weighed about 160 pounds. He was of dark complexion, something like a French Creole, had small, dark, piercing eyes, a rather pointed chin, and a very noticeable scar on the right side of his throat where it looked as though he had had his throat cut. It didn't look like it had been done in an operation but in a fight. He also had a scar on his breast.

While he was in Granbury, he was cut across the back of the neck in a fight and carried another scar as the result of this. One could hear St. Helen breathe for quite a distance, and this was worse when he became excited. I do not remember ever seeing him limp or complain of being crippled.

I think that I knew St. Helen as well, or better, than anyone else in Granbury. During the time he worked for me I could not complain of his work. He was a good worker. He claimed he was a Southerner, and once said he was from Tennessee. He did not have the appearance of having been in this part of the country long when he came to Granbury. When he was at Glen Rose, he took his meals at L. B. McClanahan's, who were from Nashville, Tenn., and St. Helen said that he was from the same state. St. Helen was a fine penman and prided himself on his penmanship. He could draw pictures of birds, eagles, horses, and men with the pen, drawing his men so well that one would recognize them. His signature was very neat and he made fine scrolls when signing his name. St. Helen was a dangerous man when drunk. He was considered a very wicked man and always went around with a pistol and knife. He could pull a pistol quicker than any other man I knew. Once I remember, he was drinking and quarrelling and about to get into a fight.

I talked him out of it. He then said, "I don't want to have any more trouble with anybody; my hands are all dyed with blood." He always seemed to be dreading something and several times while drunk claimed that he had blood on his hands. This didn't mean anything here at that time, as lots of the men had been mixed up in shooting affairs. He was always neatly dressed but not unusually so. He was very keen and could get up any kind of document he wanted. He wrote up some papers that helped a friend of his; John Reed, a gambler, beat an old man by the name of Ward out of a farm about three miles from Granbury. St. Helen wrote the claim or patent for Reed in his own hand.

St. Helen, during the time I knew him - all the time he was in Granbury, did not have a noticeable amount of money. It would have been possible for him to make quite a little money in his saloon business, but whatever money he made he got rid of about as fast as he made it. He left the women entirely alone. Kept away from public meetings and crowds, and never to my knowledge took part in any plays or entertainments. He was not interested in politics and never got dramatic unless warmed up with whiskey. He was inclined to quote poetry both when sober and drunk, but I never saw him read any book or have any in his possession. In speaking of him or to him all who knew him called him "Saint" or "St. Helen". He was well liked by the cowboys and knew how to handle them.

St. Helen claimed he was a member of the Masonic Lodge, of which I am a member, but never showed himself as one. He talked considerably about Masons and either had read a lot about them or was one.

St. Helen and Lee Nutt, who was also in a saloon and grocery here, were quite friends. John Formwalt also knew St. Helen quite well and was in his saloon a lot. I do not remember that St. Helen and Finis Bates were ever intimately acquainted and do not think it could have been possible, due to their difference in age and character. Bates was just a young green kid and St. Helen a hardened man of the world of at least forty. Bates spent the greater part of

his time while in Granbury in his office and practised very little.

I do not remember that St. Helen was ever seriously ill here in Granbury, and I am sure that if he had been sick enough to have friends in to care for him, that I would have known and remembered about it. Neither did he have a negro or Mexican porter in his saloon. As to the confession Bates claims St. Helen made to him, if made at all, it must have been told Bates as a joke just to "string" him along. St. Helen did not room here at Granbury in his saloon at night unless gambling all night, which he often did. Occasionally he slept outside back of his saloon in a wagon and claimed that he could breathe the better when in the open. He never mentioned the assassination of President Lincoln in my presence or discussed any of the people connected with it. Where he went when he left here, I do not know. He suddenly left about 1875 and that was the last I ever saw or heard of him.

(SIGNED) A. P. GORDON.

Sworn to and subscribed before me by the said A. P. Gordon this the 20th. day of August, 1921.

(SIGNED) R. E. ESTES.

Notary Public Hood County, Texas.

~~A. P. Gordon, Capt. J. H. Doyle, and others who were in business in Granbury during the time St. Helen was there. Gordon and Nutt sold liquors as well as other merchandise, and were competitors of St. Helen. Before St. Helen entered business in Granbury he worked for Gordon for nearly a year.~~

" History of Granbury, Hood county, <sup>and 130</sup> page 113: "A. P. Gordon came to Hood county in 1871, and like others of that time, engaged in school teaching till he acquired sufficient means to enable him to follow the more profitable employment of merchandising; his first experience in which was damp groceries, then so much more in demand than other kinds of merchandise. Gordon, however, by close economy and attention to business, soon began to grow out into larger business and to deal in more necessary articles of merchandise, till he discontinued liquors entirely. He has ever since remained steadily engaged in merchandising, and so prospered as to be among the foremost of merchants in the county. He has not held office, except as school superintendent in early times. He possesses a cool, calculating, undisturbed temperament, which has enabled him to baffle all difficulties and face all dangers and adversities presenting themselves, and which would have overcome most other men in his station. At the same time he has by the same characteristic of temper maintained himself in friendly relationship with his fellows in all the conditions through which our society has developed from the turbid times in our history to the present." In 1872-3, Mr. Gordon was "School Examiner and Superintendent for the County."

(2) It is rather strange too, isn't it, that Mr. Bates spent so much time with St. Helen and that the many other friends of St. Helen did not know of this? Mr. Bates told the author on February 8th and 9th, 1921, that he had never seen St. Helen under the influence of liquor. It is rather odd that he knew him so well and still could say that. In view of the great amount of testimony to the contrary, Mr. Bates' statement would indicate only a slight acquaintanceship with St. Helen.

(2½) Mr. Bates said in his book, Page 29, that when St. Helen became ill for quite a period he "took to his bed, confined in the back room of his store."

(2¾) Mr. Bates stated to the writer, in 1921, that he had no knowledge of this fight.

(3) Did Booth and Herold use passwords to get across the Navy Yard Bridge (East Potomac River Bridge)? Mr. Bates repeats the assertion that: (Page 111) "Booth and Herold 'were permitted to pass the guards without arrest by simply giving the pass word "T.B." or "T.B. Road," which was meaningless, unless understood by the guard on duty." "T.B." is a town on "T.B. Road," reached from Washington over this particular bridge, and would not be meaningless to anyone familiar with that particular section. As actually did happen with Booth and Herold, the chances that someone living in "T.B." or on "T.B. Road" would explain that they were going home to "T.B." or out on "T.B. Road" would have prevented the use of these terms as pass words.

"T.B." a collection of two or three houses and stores on the "Underground route", Washington to Richmond, about twenty-two miles southeast of Washington. This was to be the first place to be made for with Mr. Lincoln after abduction. ("Four Lincoln Conspiracies," <sup>in</sup> Century Magazine, April, 1896. by Victor Louis Mason. Also refer to the testimony of the sergeant in charge at the bridge, Silas T. Cobb; C.T. P. 84-85.)

(2 7/8) This "Confession", Mr. Bates states in the preface to his book, was made in "1878". Mr. Bates told me in 1921 that he left Granbury before the Hood County Court House burned. According to the County history, this occurred March 8, 1875.



note 10 15

(4) Mr. Bates devotes several pages (84-89) to a discussion of Andrew Johnson's character "in view of the statements made by St. Helen" and attempts to support the "Confession" by stating (Page 88) that " In this connection I have sought to learn something, if possible, of Mr. Lincoln's feeling toward Vice-President Johnson, but find only a few sentences in written history touching their relations, which are recorded by William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Wieck, in their biography of the life of Lincoln, in Volume 2, at page 232, in which Mrs. Lincoln speaks as follows:

"My husband placed great confidence in my knowledge of human nature, and it was his intention to remove Seward as soon as peace was made in the South. He greatly disliked Andrew Johnson. On one occasion we noticed him following us and it displeased Mr. Lincoln so much that he turned and asked in a loud voice, 'Why is this man,' meaning Andrew Johnson, 'forever following me?' "

" Thus we have conduct suspicious in its nature of Andrew Johnson toward Mr. Lincoln. And the world will ask of all mankind the same question Mr. Lincoln asked of his wife. And why was it that Andrew Johnson should have followed Mr. Lincoln? Does St. Helen's story explain Johnson's conduct--Johnson's motives?"

All editions of Herndon's and Wieck's "Lincoln" in the Congressional Library were carefully examined and no such quotation nor one that could possibly be construed to give any such meaning could be found in Volume 2, Page 232, nor on . . . however, page 273, Vol. 2 any page of either the two-or three-volume editions. One statement is of interest:

~~from (page 278, volume 2.)~~ "

"Mr. Lincoln took no precautions to keep out of the way of danger. So many threats had been made against him that his friends were alarmed and frequently urged him not to go out unattended. To all their entreaties he had the same answer - 'If they kill me the next man will be just as bad for them.' "

The Washington Star soon after the assassination, commenting on Lincoln's opinion of Johnson, said: "On the day before the meeting of the Baltimore Convention, Marcus L. Ward waited on Mr. Lincoln and solicited an expression of his preference as to the Vice-Presidential Nominee. Mr. Lincoln characterized him as eminently a man of all times, capable, honest, and of inflexible loyalty and indomitable will, whose selection for Vice-President would afford him (Mr. Lincoln) supreme satisfaction."

The confession of Atzerodt, who was executed July 7, 1865, for his complicity, alone would clear Andrew Johnson of any connection with the assassins.

(5) C.T. Page 87.

(6) St. Helen according to Bates, P. 35, gives as the reason for his confession that he desired "to make known to the world the purpose, as well as the motive which actuated me in the commission of the crime against the life of President Lincoln." (Bates, Page 69) "That it was just a duty I owe myself and family name that the world might know." Had he been John Wilkes Booth, he would have known that this had been rather well cared for in his diary, now in the secret archives of the War Department; the letter left with his brother-in-law, J.S. Clarke, published in the Evening Star, Washington D.C., April 20, 1865, as part of Clarke's affidavit; in the letter he left with John Matthews for the National Intelligencer, Washington, D.C., on the afternoon before the crime; and in the confessions of Atzerodt and Arnold, two of the conspirators; (Baltimore American, January 18, 1869) and the statement made by Fredrick Stone, the attorney for Payne; the conspirator who attempted the life of Secretary Seward. (Lincoln Scrap Book, Page 99, Lincolniana Department, Library of Congress) These statements and confessions have been quoted at length in earlier chapters.

(7) Atlantic Constitution publishes a letter dated May 19, 1890, at Austin, Texas, from R.B. Garrett, one of the younger Garrett sons in which he states:

"The identification of the dead man's body was complete. Standing by I saw it done. First, the picture of the young actor, so well known everywhere, was laid by the dead man's face. God never made two men so exactly alike. Then point by point the printed description, held in the hand of the detective, was verified. The height, color of hair, eyes, all exact, every scar and mark. Then the crowning evidence, on the arm of the dead man was his name in India ink, done long years before."

(8) Bates, P. 64.

(9) See descriptions in Chapter ~~VII~~ <sup>VIII</sup>. Reference to Major O'Bierne's description of the section in which Booth and Herold were hidden would indicate that St. Helen and Bates knew very little about lower Maryland. Mr. Bates acknowledged to the author that he had never visited the region as part of his "extensive investigation".

(10) Bates, Page 129.

(11) If any criticism is to be made of the soldiers searching for Booth and Herold, it is as I have shown in earlier chapters, that they were all falling over each other in an attempt to capture the murderers. They were working in squads and each squad was very anxious that ~~they~~ <sup>it</sup> should be the only one to gain any information as to where the criminals might be hidden. Consequently, there was little co-operation between the various squads. Should one get some information they wanted to keep it to themselves and follow up their own clues without the aid of others.

(12) Bates, Page 209:

"Through inquiry of a person now in Washington City, whose name it would be an abuse of confidence to disclose, I learned that there was a large family of people by the name of Ruddy living within the immediate neighborhood of Samuel Cox, on the Potomac river, where Booth was secreted, so that I take it the man killed at the Garrett farm was "Ruddy" and not "Roby" as several of the men of the Ruddy family answer the description Booth gave of the man who got his letters, pictures, check, etc."

S T A T E M E N T

O F

MR. JOHN GARNER

Charles County - Maryland.

I am eighty-two years old and have lived in this neighborhood for -- years and remember quite clearly events happening during the Civil War, 1860-65.

At the time of the assassination of President Lincoln I was living down on the "Neck" not far from the home of Thomas A. Jones. I knew him, "Col." Samuel Cox of Cox's Station, and Franklin A. Roby, "Col." Cox's overseer, all quite well. I also was well acquainted with George Atzerodt, who was hung as one of the Conspirators. I went hunting with him a good many times when we were boys together.

Atzerodt, as a boy, didn't have good "horse sense" and when he grew up became quite a drinker and a "good for nothing."

Col. Cox was a wealthy and pompous man and practically ruled this section of the country. Tom Jones was a foster brother of "Col." Cox and a contrabrand runner across the Potomac River during the Civil War. He was arrested and imprisoned for this several times. Jones was the type of man who could put on a "long" face and be the most innocent looking fellow in the world when he wanted to.

Franklin Roby was Col. Cox's overseer. He was a quiet sort of man who didn't say much unless religiously aroused. He was a Shouting Methodist by religion and his sport was fox hunting.

These three people, Col. Cox, Tom Jones, Franklin Roby, and an old negro by the name of Woodland, who worked for Jones, are the only ones I ever heard of being connected with the care of Booth and Herold at Cox's place. Jones took them from there to the Potomac. I have never heard of a family of Ruddy's and am sure that no one by the name of Ruddy ever lived around Cox's

Station.

Franklin Roby, I know was alive thirty-two years ago, for I moved into the place I am now living at that time and after I moved Roby spent a night with us.

Roby always claimed that he had very little to do with the care of Booth and Herold; that Jones was really the man who cared for them.

About the time Roby was here last, Tom Jones had been convinced by a young fellow by the name of Mattingly that he should write a book about Booth and that they, Jones and Mattingly, would sell it at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. They went to Chicago and tried to sell it from a tent. Jones was inside the tent and Mattingly stood outside telling the crowd that the man who aided John Wilkes Booth to escape was inside and would sell them copies of his book which told the story. An old Union soldier stepped up and said that he was a boyhood friend of Abe Lincoln and would like to get hold of the Blankety - Blank - Blank - Blank that aided Lincoln's murderer to escape and just to let him inside. Jones heard this and went out the back end of the tent, and he and Mattingly didn't try to sell any more of the books.

As I remember when Roby stayed with us that night Jones was mentioned and the big reward offered for Booth and Herold and Roby "opined that he guessed Tom was more afraid of Col. Cox than he was of the Federal Army or his desire to have the reward."

Jones always said that Herold had driven the horses, Booth's and Herold's, into the quicksand in the swamp near Cox's place and shot them, and that the horses buried themselves.

Signed John X Garner  
his mark

WITNESS: EUGENE MUDD.

(13)

S T A T E M E N T   O F

CHARLES GARNER

Charles County - Maryland.

I am the son of John Garner, am sixty years old and have lived here all my life. I have never heard of people living in this neighborhood or around Bel Alton (Cox's Station) by the name of Ruddy. I knew Franklin Roby who worked for Col. Cox. He had a son and daughter, father and son are both dead, and the daughter married somebody away from here; where she now lives, I do not know. Franklin Roby died about twenty years ago.

My father, John Garner, Franklin Roby, myself and several others were out fox hunting together a number of times. I remember Roby was a good Methodist and would not swear like most of us. He used a peculiar "cuss" word "Dandet, dandet," and we used to laugh about it. The only part he played in the Booth affair was to show Booth and Herold where to hide until Jones came. I heard Jones say that when he (Jones) arrived at Col. Cox's that eventful morning, the Colonel said, "By God, Jones, I want you to feed and care for these men."

(SIGNED) CHARLES GARNER.

State of Maryland)  
                                  ) S S  
County of Charles)

I, Eugene Mudd, a Notary Public, in and for the said County in the State aforesaid, do hereby certify, that Charles Garner personally known to me to be the same person whose name is subscribed to the foregoing instrument, appeared before me this day in person, and acknowledged that he signed, the said instrument.

Given under my hand and seal, this 25th day of July, 1921.

My commission expires May 1, 1922.

(SIGNED) EUGENE MUDD

Notary Public.





23

3423 16th St., N. W.,  
Washington, D. C.  
March 8, 1926

Mr F L Black  
The Dearborn Independent  
Dearborn, Mich.

Dear Sir:

Replying to your letter of the 3rd instant, I beg leave to state that Mr John Garner of near La Plata, Charles County, Maryland, is now dead. His son, Mr Charlie Garner, is living in the old farm home near La Plata. Both are highly esteemed as among Charles County's most estimable citizens, and anything either of them may have said as to what they knew or have heard concerning the assassination of President Lincoln may be relied upon as strictly true.

The elder Mr Garner was living and a grown man at the time of the assassination. Both Mr John Garner and his son, Charlie, lived the quiet uneventful life of a farmer. Both took delight in all the sports of a country life; they kept always three or four good fox hounds and followed the chase with enthusiasm. I hunted with them many times. Charlie lives near La Plata, which is his post office, and you may communicate with him there, and if he has a picture of his father, which I suppose he has, I am sure he would send you one upon request.

I have a book entitled "J. Wilkes Booth," written by Tom Jones, who put Booth across the Potomac river when he made his escape from Washington after the assassination, and would show it to you should you come to Washington at any time. There are but few copies of it and I do not trust it out of my house.

I was an old Confederate soldier; was in the battle of Gettysburg and at Appomatox when General Lee surrendered.

Very truly yours  
A W Neale  
3423 16th Street N.W.  
Washington D.C.

I regret that I cannot give you information as to where Mr Franklin Robey (the name is spelled "Robey") is buried, but feel sure that it may be ascertained without much difficulty from his relatives or acquaintances in Charles County, perhaps from Mr Charlie Garner.

A. W. N.

(14) Mr. Bates had in his possession, before writing his book, a copy of the April 1896 Century Magazine with Victor Louis Mason's story, "Four Lincoln Conspiracies." This was published eleven years before Bates' book and reference to it will show that it was from this he got his pictures of Booth's boot, Dr. Mudd's home, the Surratt Tavern, etc.

In this is the correct story of the connection of Franklin Robey, Cox's overseer, with Booth and Herold at the Cox plantation. Why did not Mr. Bates get his story straight on the "Ruddy" name from this?

(15) Bates, Page 80.

(16) Bates, Page 66.